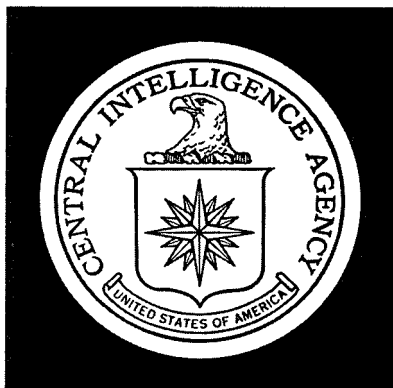


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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

IMPLICATIONS OF ALGERIAN ARMS BUILDUP

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24

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
2 February 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Implications of Algerian Arms Buildup

Summary

The continued flow of Soviet arms into Algeria--estimated to have a total value of \$185 million--has increased the nervousness of Algeria's neighbors and has aroused considerable speculation in Western capitals as to its intentions.

The Algerians describe the arms buildup as defensive in nature--and there is no evidence to refute this claim--but modern equipment for the army is also a matter of prestige for the Boumediene government. The USSR's motivation in providing military assistance is to increase Soviet influence in the Algerian Army, the most significant political force in this major African country.

The Algerian regime has no effective domestic opposition, and depends on the military for support. Any change in leadership probably would not substantially change the government's present domestic and foreign policies.

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NOTE: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of Research and Reports.

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### Background

1. The Algerian Army is developing into a formidable force on the African continent. In size (62,000 men) and numbers of military aircraft (83 jets), it is surpassed only by Egypt and South Africa. However, it presently lacks the logistics needed to sustain its forces in the field for any appreciable time.
2. The Algerian arms buildup began in the fall of 1963 coincident with the Moroccan-Algerian border clash. Most of the materiel, particularly aircraft, armor, artillery, and naval units (see chart), has come from the Soviet Union, which also provided training in the USSR and sent several hundred training specialists to Algeria. The pace of the shipments increased steadily, reaching a total of 28 in 1966.
3. The USSR, however, is not the sole supplier of the Algerian Army. Egypt has furnished some equipment and continues to provide instructors in Algeria and specialized training in Egypt. France is giving support to engineering and medical services and allocates a few training slots in its military schools. Transport and other general support equipment have been obtained from a variety of sources, including the UK and West Germany. Italy is training a small group of naval officers. Algeria has also purchased some helicopters, communications equipment, and certain quartermaster-type supplies from US commercial sources.
4. Soviet materiel is apparently being supplied under two agreements concluded in February 1963 and May 1965 while Ben Bella was in power. Boumediene as minister of defense, however, probably was the principal negotiator; he visited Moscow in September 1963 and in May 1965. No information is available as to the terms of those agreements, but the value of the equipment received thus far is estimated at \$185 million. It is believed that Boumediene has not concluded any new agreements since he came to power in June 1965.

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### Soviet Arms Policy

5. The Soviet Union is providing military assistance to Algeria primarily to increase its influence within the most significant political force in the country--the Algerian Army.

6. At the time of Algerian independence the army sorely needed military assistance. With France willing to provide economic aid, the easiest and quickest way for Moscow to gain influence in Algerian affairs was through military assistance.

7. There are several factors which make Algeria worthy of Soviet attention. It is the largest of the North African states and, internationally, the most influential. Algeria has been active in such radical organizations as the Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity Organization, and there is no "third world" country more stridently critical of US policy in Vietnam. As a one-party state attempting a "socialist" method of development, Algeria also qualifies as one of the chosen few "revolutionary democratic" states which merit Soviet assistance.

8. While the Soviets are willing to supply the Algerians with the hardware they desire, there is no indication that they are anxious for them to use it. In line with its policy elsewhere, Moscow wants to avoid open confrontations between Algeria and Western-oriented Morocco and Tunisia.

### Algeria's Intentions

9. Although the Algerian Government admits that the humiliation its army suffered at the hands of the Moroccan forces during border hostilities in October 1963 is an underlying factor in the present military buildup, it disclaims any aggressive intentions, and there is no reason to doubt Algeria's statement. Its objective, it says, is a small but technically competent and well-armed striking force which could deter any potential attacker. It claims that it needs a substantial force to protect some 4,000 miles of land boundaries and a coast line of nearly 800 miles.

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10. The Algerian Government has evinced a pathological fear of external aggression. It considers Moroccan military forces and Rabat's territorial claims a real threat to Algerian security. Last spring and summer, Algerian officials clearly believed recurrent rumors that the US had concluded base agreements with both Morocco and Tunisia with the objective of "encircling" Algeria. Repeated denials by US, Moroccan, and Tunisian officials somewhat allayed their fears. Yet within the past fortnight, two Algerian officials have cited the continued lack of response to Algeria's request of 13 August for 250,000 tons of US PL 480 wheat, the prospect of new American arms for Morocco and Tunisia, the approaching visit to the US of Morocco's King Hassan, and the conference in Tangier of American diplomats from North and West Africa as factors leading Algiers to conclude that the US may indeed be trying to "encircle" Algeria through Morocco and Tunisia.

11. Although Algeria's relations with Tunisia seem to have improved somewhat in recent months, its relations with Morocco continue to be shaky. The most recent irritation was King Hassan's arrangement for the burial in Morocco of Mohamed Khider, the former secretary general of Algeria's only political party, the National Liberation Front (FLN). Khider, who had "absconded" with the FLN treasury amounting to some \$10 to \$15 million, was assassinated in Madrid on 3 January.

The Algerian Army

12. Inheriting a fragmented and ineffectual party, the Boumediene government has relied on the army as its base of support. The army's participation in government is largely in policy matters. More than half of the 24 members of the Revolutionary Council--the country's policy making body--are military officers, and virtually all were members of the armed forces during the rebellion.

13. The army itself is divided into four factions: (a) former officers or noncommissioned officers of the French Army who, as members of the

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former rebel "Army of the Exterior" and general staff, sat out most of the rebellion in neighboring Tunisia and Morocco; (b) ex-guerrilla chieftains of the "Interior Army" who have developed leadership qualities and considerable influence in their own regions; (c) relative newcomers from the French Army whose military background is good but who have little prestige because of their late conversion to the nationalist cause; and (d) the "new army" trained abroad since independence, mostly in the USSR and Egypt. Boumediene's objective has been through intensive training to create a more homogeneous professional army and to smooth over the inevitable frictions among these groups.

#### Coup Prospects

14. While the possibility cannot be ruled out, it appears unlikely that any element of the armed forces could successfully plan or carry out a coup. It does not appear that any group of military commanders could muster sufficient support to force through measures which Boumediene and his army supporters opposed. Should key commanders, including those who control the bulk of the army's fire power, disagree with Boumediene on an issue of importance to the military, he would fall in line.

15. Should Boumediene be assassinated, the Revolutionary Council would probably select a successor. In such event, the council probably would continue to formulate policy and to delegate the day-to-day administration of the government to a group of the most highly qualified and competent technicians available. External and internal policies probably would not change; Algeria would be likely to retain close ties with France, to aspire to leadership in the "third world," to maintain an affinity for African radicals and Communist regimes, and to be extremely suspicious of foreign advice and advisers.

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Talking paper for the memorandum,  
Implications of Algerian Arms Buildup

1. This memorandum, prepared at the request of the D/OCI, has been coordinated with ORR.

2. The paper says there is no evidence to refute Algeria's claim that the continuing Soviet arms buildup in Algeria--an estimated \$185 million worth to date--is for defensive purposes. The government has evinced a pathological fear of external aggression, and considers Moroccan military forces and Rabat's territorial claims a real threat to Algeria's security. The USSR's motives in furnishing military assistance is to increase its influence in the country, since the army is the most significant political force in Algeria. The buildup is also a matter of prestige for the Boumediene regime, which is without effective domestic opposition and is dependent on the military for support. The chances of a coup are discounted.

3. It is recommended that the memorandum be given routine internal and external dissemination.

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